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Richard Nixon Facing New Ordeal In California Political Campaign

Running for Governor With the Odds Against Him — Still Given a Chance for Success.

Tense Even Before the Speaking, Politicking Marathon Opens — His Book Reveals the Man.

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THE ORDEAL to which Richard Nixon is about to subject himself is almost more than flesh and blood — not to mention the ego — should have to endure. Running for Governor of California he is in the midst of a seventh crisis with the odds on his victory at least as long as in any of the six crises he describes so feelingly in his just-published book.

Consider the circumstances. He was beaten for the presidency by an eyelash. As he tells his audiences today the shift of 14,000 votes in three states would have made him the winner over John F. Kennedy. That was harder to take than a really decisive defeat, since the haunting might-have-beens can never quite be put out of mind.

On that cruel November morning in 1960 he was left without any public office and in effect without a base from which to operate. Except for campaigning he had not really lived in his native state since the beginning of World War II, when he went to Washington first to work in the Office of Price Administration and then to enter the Navy. After 14 years of holding elective office all he owned was an equity in his Washington house.

IN CALIFORNIA the Republican organization, as he well knew, was virtually nonexistent. He found three rivals in the G.O.P. governorship race, all of whom felt they had a better right to the nomination than Nixon if only on the basis of their understanding of state problems.

Of the two who have already dropped out, one, former Governor Goodwin J. Knight, is expected eventually to come out for the Democratic incumbent, Governor Edmund G. Brown. When former Lieutenant Governor Harold J. Powers bowed out he issued a bitter statement denouncing "the kingmakers" who had decreed "that California Republicans shall take a discard from the rubble heap of national politics and like it."

The third rival, Joseph Shell, minority leader of the State Assembly, is fighting hard with a generous campaign fund and the support of the right wing. He insists his strength is rising and he says freely that if Nixon is the nominee Brown will defeat him by 500,000 votes. The presence of Shell in the primary on June 5 accentuates the split in the party between "right" and "moderate."

The Democrats have not only the governorship but both houses of the legislature. They have 1,200 000 more registered voters than the Republicans in a ratio of three to two. The legislature in a hard-boiled reshuffling of the state's congressional districts—after the pattern set by the Republicans ten years ago—knocked out many of the comparatively safe seats that gave the G.O.P. nearly an even break on the congressional delegation.

This, then, is what Nixon confronts as he begins at the bottom of the political ladder. It is hardly to be wondered at that members of his family and close friends are said to have tried to dissuade him from making the race.

The days, weeks, months in which without any respite, except for snatches of sleep, he must smile, shake hands, speak incessantly, write speeches, organize his campaign, ceaselessly travel over this many-faceted state have the look of an unending treadmill on which he has chained himself. Nor is it surprising that reports circulate to the effect that he is tense, irritable, weary even before the campaign has really begun.

But no matter how great the odds, Nixon's chances of success should not be discounted. For he is the same Nixon who has gone so far on resources that in any objective view are seen to be limited.

A GREAT DEAL has been written, some of it by this observer, about the new Nixon and the old Nixon. In retrospect that has a foolish sound. Seeing him in action today you realize he is exactly the same product of drive and discipline—above all the latter—who started out in 1946 as a complete newcomer to politics to win a seat in Congress. The same phrases, the same sudden smile with his own humorous sally, the same references to Pat and to his daughters, Julie and Tricia, the stress on private enterprise in the Republican view and government dependence in the Democratic view, the forceful yet intimate manner of speaking, the style is as familiar as that of a great popular star who plays himself in every role.

"It takes real people to come back after that," he tells his Republican audience when he rehearses the heartbreaking 14,000 vote miss of 1960. "Not that I'm talking about the candidates, they always come back, of course, but you people who are going out and carrying the word to your

What makes the performance even more remarkable is the fact that there is in the Nixon temperament itself. There is in that temperament little if any of the easy extrovert who likes people and enjoys the give and take of political life. It is in a sense Nixon versus Nixon and the discipline and

RICHARD NIXON in Los Angeles

and the reticence. This underscores the ordeal of still one more campaign, one more personal and intimate crisis played out on the national stage.

Some of Nixon's former associates complain that he is following the same course —a mistaken course as they see it—that he followed in the presidential campaign. He is playing it alone, keeping the decisions to himself. But that is an essential of the familiar, long-established Nixon, who now once again defies fate and the lightning of the gods.

Seldom in the annals of American politics has a document so self-revealing as Nixon's "Six Crises" been published. It is an intensely personal account of six encounters with the dragon.

THE DRAGON wears many faces. It is the American press and in particular certain sections of the press. It is the Democratic party. It is Communism and Premier Khrushchev. But in each account the dragon, if not slain, is shown up for the wicked, unfair, reprehensible creature it is.

But above all the book is important for its revelation of the Nixon character. The word "tension" recurs again and again in each of the six chapters. The man each time seems to have been under an intolerable strain. That is the tragedy —and the triumph—that behind the fixed gaze, the face of the ambitious, hopeful American he presents to the world, he should have suffered so greatly.

The book, which he carefully says is not a memoir, confirms the impression that he is a comparatively new type in our political life. If there was any joy in battle, as in the hearty jousting with a variety of dragons of Theodore Roosevelt, it is not here.

It is perhaps significant that one of the few persons for whom Nixon expresses unqualified respect and praise is Thomas E. Dewey, former Governor of New York and twice defeated candidate for President. They have much in common, Dewey being in a sense Nixon's political progenitor.

One of the most interesting relationships, as the author recounts the Hiss case, the private fund controversy in the 1952 campaign, the Eisenhower heart attack, the Caracas stoning, the encounter with Khrushchev and the '60 campaign, is that with the President under whom he served. Nixon pays Eisenhower full tribute as hero and as chief executive. But between the lines it is evident that Eisenhower's indecision and indifference, particularly after the revelation of the fund which Nixon's business supporters made available to him while he was Senator, was hard to take.

At one point he says that Eisenhower "was a far more complex and devious man than most people realized" and adds "in the best sense of those words." In the early months of 1956 when he could not be sure whether the President wanted him on the ticket or not, Nixon says he went through "another period of agonizing indecision" which took "a heavy toll mentally, physically and emotionally."

Nixon's book appears as he starts his active campaign for the governorship first in the primary and, with his nomination believed to be assured, pointed up the election in November. Some observers have questioned the wisdom of reviving these controversies and of the former Vice President's leading part on the national stage as he contends for an office that would require him to preside over the affairs of what is so soon to be the most populous state in the union.

HIS CHIEF CHARGE against President Kennedy is that in the 1960 campaign Kennedy was briefed privately on the training of volunteers for an invasion of Cuba and yet rebuked the Eisenhower Administration for not taking action against Castro. Although Allen Dulles, head of the CIA at the time the candidates were briefed, denies that this was so, Nixon nevertheless sticks to the charge in a footnote in a second edition of his book.

The Nixon strategy in the contest for the governorship is obviously to expand on his national reputation and the book will serve that end. Even if coldly and objectively it might be the wiser course to keep within the confines of California he would probably find it hard not to run against the President. This is a return engagement at the state level with Governor Brown as a stand-in for the President. Nixon seems to believe that having carried the state by 35,000 votes in 1960 he can invoke the same or an even greater response from his personal following this time.

There emerges from "Six Crises" Nixon's sense of injury and hurt. He resents the wealth of those who opposed him, Nelson Rockefeller, the Kennedys, and in one of his few generalizations he notes that the time may have come when only those with private riches can run for high public office. But as though to show that the gap can be narrowed, he says that in his first year in private life, from the law, his syndicated column and his book, his income will be greater than his entire government salary for the 14 years he was in Washington. His salary as Vice President was $35,000 a year and in Congress, $22,500.

Nixon believes that his major role in sending Alger Hiss to prison brought him hatred and enmity that have never been abated. He goes so far as to say that if it had not been for the Hiss case he might be President today. But he adds that if it had not been for Hiss he would never have been Vice President and a presidential candidate.

In his acceptance speech when he was nominated by the Republicans in 1960 Nixon said, "I believe in the American dream because I have seen it come true in my own life." He has now made it abundantly clear how much it cost to realize that dream.